



County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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SACHI A. HAMAI
Interim Chief Executive Officer

May 1, 2015

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To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
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From: Sachi A. Hamai 
Interim Chief Executive Officer

MOTION TO DIRECT THE INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER TO INSTRUCT THE SACRAMENTO ADVOCATES TO SUPPORT AB 1461 (ITEM NO. 8, AGENDA OF MAY 5, 2015)

Item No. 8 on the May 5, 2015 Agenda is a motion by Supervisor Ridley-Thomas to direct the Interim Chief Executive Officer to instruct the Sacramento advocates to support AB 1461 (Gonzalez, Alejo, and McCarty), which would provide for automatic voter registration based on the Department of Motor Vehicle records.

Background

Secretary of State Alex Padilla reports that approximately 25 percent of all registered California voters cast a ballot statewide in the June 3, 2014 Primary Election. About 42 percent of registered voters statewide participated in the November 4, 2014 General Election. Los Angeles County participation in each of these elections was lower than the statewide average, with nearly 17 percent of registered voters participating in the Primary Election and 31 percent for the General Election. County voter participation rates have a significant impact on statewide voter turnout statistics because over 27 percent of all registered California voters live in Los Angeles County. In response to historically low voter participation, a number of State Legislators in both houses have introduced measures to address low voter turnout.

The Federal National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA) requires each state to register a person to vote simultaneously with an application for a new or renewed driver's license. The California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) is not currently in compliance with this provision because it separates the voter registration form from the driver's license form.

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AB 1461 (Gonzalez, Alejo, and McCarty)

AB 1461 (Gonzalez, Alejo, and McCarty), which as amended on April 20, 2015, would establish the California New Motor Voter Program. This measure would direct the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to electronically transmit to the Secretary of State the records of individuals issued an original or renewed driver's license or State identification card only if the applicant provides proof of United States citizenship. The Secretary of State would then transmit each eligible voter's DMV record to the appropriate county elections official and notify the record holder that he or she will be registered to vote unless he or she declines to be registered within 21 days of the notice. AB 1461 would continue to protect those covered by existing confidentiality laws. Voters would retain their right to cancel their voter registration at any time by submitting a request to their county elections official.

AB 1461 is modeled after Oregon's House Bill 2177, which as signed into law on March 16, 2015, created a first-in-the-nation system that automatically registers Oregon voters by drawing data from driver's license records while also providing an opportunity to opt out of the voter registration system.

According to the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC), AB 1461 would significantly increase opportunities for California residents to participate in the elections process by streamlining and enhancing voter registration. The RR/CC notes that the current motor voter system in California, which is over two decades old, is an inefficient, paper-based voter registration process between the DMV and the Secretary of State.

The Registrar Recorder indicates that AB 1461 would enhance the current voter registration process by using an electronic data transfer directly from the DMV to the Secretary of State to automatically place eligible voters who are obtaining or renewing a driver's license or State identification card on the State's active voter roll. To address privacy concerns, the RR/CC notes that the bill contains language to prohibit the transfer of non-citizen information to the Secretary of State.

Operationally, the Registrar Recorder reports it would be able to successfully adapt to the new process contemplated by AB 1461, which could potentially free up department resources currently used to fund the manual voter registration process. Additional resources would enable the RR/CC to place a greater emphasis on voter outreach and education, leading to better voter turnout in the County. Overall, the RR/CC indicates that AB 1461 is correctly aligned with the department's emphasis on decreasing administrative barriers to voting and increasing voter participation.

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Conclusion

There is no existing Board policy to support legislation which would increase voter turnout by establishing a process for automatic voter registration based on Department of Motor Vehicle records. **Therefore, support for AB 1461 is a matter for Board policy determination.**

SAH:JJ:MR
VE:DE:gl

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel